



## Area plans for transportation

**ROADS: More passenger trains and freeway lanes are included in the region's outline.**

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**By BRADLEY WEAVER / The Press-Enterprise**

Inland residents will have wider freeways, more carpool lanes and an expanded Metrolink commuter train system under a \$213 billion transportation plan approved Thursday.

Members of the Southern California Association of Governments, the planning group for a six-county region, adopted their "Destination 2030" blueprint that calls for sweeping changes to Southland transportation over the next 26 years.

The plan features a high-speed train system to link Southern California airports, new toll roads and a 140-mile stretch of truck-only lanes between Long Beach and Barstow.

Officials say the plan is updated every three years to adjust to changes in political and financial developments that affect roads and mass transit.

Projects must be included in the plan to qualify for federal and state funding.

"With ever-increasing congestion on Southern California's existing roads, rail and airport networks, our region's economic health will be jeopardized by our (inability) to handle ever-growing demands," said SCAG member and Temecula Councilman Ron Roberts.

The group unveiled Destination 2030 in October for an extensive round of public review. The plan seeks to change a state law that allows the Legislature to borrow transportation dollars for other expenses. Gas taxes that were supposed to be used for roadwork will be diverted to the state's general fund under Gov. Schwarzenegger's budget proposal for 2004-05.

Transportation leaders say Inland residents should not expect a future without traffic, but they say much can be done to improve freeway conditions.

Planners say more homes and apartments need to be built near jobs to reduce commute times and

distances while the region adds 6 million people over the next 27 years.

According to statistics provided by SCAG, growth in Southern California has outpaced road capacity. The Southland's population grew by 100 percent from 1960 to 2000. In the same 40 years, freeway capacity increased by less than 30 percent. Commuters now waste 1.6 million hours a day in traffic and that number is expected to double by 2030.

The plan includes \$160 million to extend Metrolink from downtown Riverside to Perris. The new service would carry as many as 2,500 passengers a day when it opens in four years.

Also included are new freeway lanes on Interstate 215 between Moreno Valley and Temecula and Interstate 15 near the Riverside-San Diego county line. Interstate 215 would also get carpool lanes between Murrieta and Menifee.

The plan suggests that March Air Reserve Base, which is used for military and commercial cargo, will be needed to take pressure off Los Angeles International Airport and handle as many as 8 million passengers a year. The Riverside County Transportation Commission largely supports the plan, but some members have said that allowing commercial jets at March would increase traffic on Inland freeways.

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